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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [OIIP](#) [OPRC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PK](#)
SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: JULY 02, 2009

Summary: Reports on killing of 28 militants of Mangal Bagh-led Lashkar-e-Islam (LI), including an unidentified commander when gunship helicopters pounded the hideouts of the militant group in Tirah, Khyber Agency dominated headlines in all newspapers on Monday. However, a Urdu language daily "Jang," claimed that the slain commander was none other than Mangal Bagh himself. Interior Minister Rehman Malik's statement that "Swat Taliban leader Maulana Fazalullah has been critically injured" in the ongoing military offensive received prominent display. Assistant Secretary of State Robert Blake's remarks that he made in an interview with an Indian wire service that "India needed not to be concerned about the U.S. assistance to Pakistan" was also highlighted. Reports on a latest poll conducted by the World Public Opinion that "most Pakistanis see Taliban and Al Qaeda as a critical threat to the country" also received extensive coverage in almost all newspapers.

The government's decision to increase prices of petroleum products came under critical editorial comments, however, some newspapers ran editorials on the current military offensive against militancy. Commenting on the brutal slaughter of 18 wounded militants by order of Baitullah Mehsud, the Lahore-based liberal English daily, "Daily Times," observed that "Baitullah's technique is based on the extremely savage ways of inflicting death." The center-right national English daily "The Nation" noted that "acts of the sort are a far cry from the militant claims that they were fighting for Sharia in the valley of Swat." In its editorial on the subject, another liberal English daily, "The Post," advised that "there should be no letdown in the military operation in the face of these bullying militants." End Summary.

News Stories

"28 Lashkar-e-Islam (LI) Militants Killed In Khyber" "The News" (07/02)

"At least 28 militants, including an unidentified commander, were killed when gunship helicopters pounded the hideouts of Mangal Bagh-led Lashkar-e-Islam (LI), a banned militant organisation in the Tirah Valley of Khyber Agency on Wednesday, an official of Frontier Corps (FC) Major Fazal claimed."

"Fazlullah Seriously Injured: Malik" "The Nation" (07/02)

"Federal Interior Minister Rehman Malik has said that Swat Taliban leader Maulana Fazlullah has been seriously injured in the operation launched against militants in Swat. In an interview to the BBC on

Wednesday, Malik said that the so-called leaders of the militants were in hiding but will be taken out of their hiding places. 'We need help from the world and will probe, who is providing money and arms to Taliban,' he said. He said the terrorists hiding in South Waziristan were making plans for terror attacks."

"U.S. To Consult India Closely In Fight Against Extremism" "Dawn" (07/02)

"The United States assured India on Wednesday that it would consult New Delhi 'very closely' in the fight against extremism in South Asia. In an interview to India's PTI news agency, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Robert Blake, however, described Pakistan and Afghanistan as America's 'strategic priority' because of the militancy that threatened to destabilize both the countries.... Blake said that India needed not be concerned about the U.S. assistance to Pakistan. 'The new focus in terms of our relationship with Pakistan is to dramatically increase economic assistance to Pakistan to help that country overcome some of its economic challenges and to extend the writ of the government to other parts of Pakistan,' he said."

"Most Pakistanis See Taliban, Al Qaeda As Threat: Survey" "Dawn" (07/02)

"Most Pakistanis now see the Pakistani Taliban as well as Al Qaeda as a critical threat to the country - a major shift from 18 months ago - and support the government and army in their fight in the Swat valley against the militants, according to findings of a new public opinion survey released on Wednesday. 'A sea change has occurred in Pakistani public opinion. The tactics and undemocratic bent of militant groups - in tribal areas as well as Swat - have brought widespread revulsion and turned Pakistanis against them,' comments Clay Ramsay, Research Director at World Public Opinion Poll."

"Troika For Total Purge Of Militants" "The Nation" (07/02)

"Top leadership of the country (troika) Wednesday reaffirmed commitment to fight in the troubled areas of north-west and tribal belt 'till complete elimination of the militants.' 'The militants would be chased till they surrender or get killed,' it was asserted in a high level meeting held here at the Aiwan-e-Sadr. Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani and Chief of the Army Staff General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani called on President Asif Ali Zardari to discuss the issues relating to overall law and order situation in the country."

"Operation In Swat To End Soon: Gilani" "Daily Times" (07/02)

"The army operation in Swat and Malakand Division will be over soon and the internally displaced persons (IDPs) will return to their homes with respect and dignity, Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani told reporters at Prime Minister's House on Wednesday."

"No Plan to Launch Operation In North Waziristan: Army" "Dawn" (07/02)

"The army has reiterated that it has no intention of launching an operation in North Waziristan, but warned that severe action will be taken if security forces come under attack. The army's message for the people of the agency was contained in pamphlets dropped from helicopters over Miramshah and other parts of the region on Wednesday."

"Forces Not Ready For South Waziristan Offensive" "Dawn" (07/02)

"Pakistan is not yet ready to launch a full-fledged military offensive in South Waziristan, experts told a seminar in Washington. 'The Pakistani military is very over-stretched,' Shuja Nawaz, a strategic analyst associated with the Atlantic Council in Washington, said. 'The military does not have the capacity to launch a full-fledged operation while it is engaged in other places.' Mr. Nawaz told the seminar at the Atlantic Council that the army would like to clear the militants from the settled areas first, particularly D.I. Khan."

"Al Qaeda Is On The Run, Claims Qureshi" "The Nation" (07/02)

"Pakistan is claiming to have 'turned the tide' in its battle with militants and says it has Al Qaeda 'on the run' after a series of government offensives. Today, public opinion has converted to such an extent that the tribes have set up Lashkars (militias) to support Army operations," Foreign Minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi told a British newspaper."

"Support For Lashkar will Continue, Says Hoti" "Dawn" (07/02)

"Two members of a Lashkar (militia) were killed in clashes with militants in Doog Darra while NWFP Chief Minister Amir Haider Khan Hoti addressed tribal elders of Upper Dir on Wednesday. He said the government had helped the Lashkar and would continue to support it. He said that action would continue till the defeat of the militants in Malakand region."

"Military Action Yielding Positive Results: Iftikhar" "The Nation" (07/02)

"Claiming that the ongoing military operation against militants is yielding positive and fruitful results, NWFP Information Minister Mian Iftikhar Hussain has re-affirmed his government's resolve to eradicate terrorism and militancy from the region."

"Kurram Clashes Claim 14 Lives" "The News" (07/02)

"Fourteen persons were killed and 26 others injured in clashes between the rival groups in Sadda/Parachinar on Wednesday night. Later, the elders of Upper and Lower Kurram succeeded in brokering ceasefire after hectic efforts, sources said."

"Taliban Threat In Orakzai Security Men Stop Performing Duty" "Dawn" (07/02)

"About 150 Khasadar and Levies personnel on Wednesday stopped performing their duties in upper Orakzai Agency on expiry of the deadline given to them by the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan. Deputy TTP Chief in Orakzai Hakeemullah Mehsud and their Shura had a few days ago ordered the Khasadar force and all government servants to resign from their jobs and stop taking salaries from the 'pro-U.S. government.' In a message to the Mamozai tribe, the TTP leader had warned the Khasadars that if they or their relatives serving under the government failed to resign, the Taliban would take action against them, a Khasadar in Orakzai told 'Dawn' by telephone on Wednesday."

"Two Killed In Nowshera Rocket Attack" "The News" (07/02)

"Two persons were killed and three others injured when four rockets fired by the militants hit different places in the cantonment area in Nowshera in the wee hours of Wednesday."

"Cop Killed As Militants Hit Check-Post, Convoy" "The Nation" (07/02)

"A policeman was killed and nine others were injured when militants attacked a police check-post and a convoy in Tall area of Hangu district on Wednesday."

"Tribal Elder, Three Others Shot Dead" "Dawn" (07/02)

"A pro-government tribal elder and three other people were killed in an attack on their vehicle in Jamrud tehsil of the Khyber Agency on Wednesday, sources said."

"U.S. Slaps Sanctions On Three Leaders Of Lashkar-e-Taiba" "Dawn" (07/02)

"The United States imposed on Wednesday sanctions on an Al Qaeda backer and three leaders of the Lashkar-e-Taiba. The U.S. Treasury said it was imposing an assets freeze on the four, identified as FazeelA-Tul Shaykh Abu Mohammed Ameen AlPeshawari, Arif Qasmani, Mohammed Yahya Mujahid, and Nasir Javaid."

"Navy To Get 10 U.S. Surveillance Aircraft" "The News" (07/02)

"Pakistan Navy will get 10 refurbished United States P3C Orion anti-submarine surveillance aircraft during the next three years. The first two such aircraft will be delivered to the navy by October

this year. 'All the 10 aircraft having 18 hours of flying endurance are totally funded by the U.S.,' Commander, Pakistan Fleet, Rear Admiral Muhammad Asif Sandila told newsmen on Wednesday in Karachi."

"India Pulls Out Troops From Kashmir Town" "Dawn" (07/02)

"India withdrew paramilitary troops on Wednesday from a tense town in occupied Kashmir where they shot dead four protesters to quell anti-India demonstrations in the past three days, the government said. Baramulla town, near the Line of Control, is the first town in the disputed region where the police will look after law and order. Home Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram had said last month that New Delhi planned to withdraw some troops from towns across the region after a significant fall in militant violence."

Editorials/Op-eds

"Baitullah's Evil Tactics," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (07/02)

"Baitullah is showing signs of being under pressure by employing savage tactics of retaliation too. Anyone who speaks against him inside the vast tracts occupied by the various warlords is liable to get killed.... As he faces what may be the last chapter in his book of unbelievable cruelty, he is carefully sustaining the psychology of intimidation among populations that are forced to live under his authority.... Baitullah's technique is based on the extremely savage ways of inflicting death.... Far from being a pious warrior in the Pashtun tradition, Baitullah uses deceit as a tactic of popular disarmament. The people now know him but are helpless living under his authority. The people's true verdict will come after the Pakistan army has hunted him down."

"Un-Islamic Indeed," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (07/02)

"According to reports coming in from ISPR, the militants in Bhia valley have killed 18 of their own fighters while making a retreat during an Army operation against them.... This is an extreme act and appears to have been caused by desperation because, probably, the commander apprehended that the injured could fall into the hands of Pakistan Army and divulge some secrets.... Acts of the sort are a far cry from the militant claims that they were fighting for Sharia in the Valley of Swat.... In fact, these acts are entirely un-Islamic."

"Combating Taliban," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (07/02)

"According to ISPR, Taliban have killed 18 of their injured companions in Biha valley as they could not take them along while retreating. This point to the fact that Taliban are on the run and have their communication system partly or wholly destroyed.... South Waziristan is believed to be the stronghold of Taliban Chief whose killing or arrest will mean a lot for the fight against extremists.... There should be no letdown in the military operation in the face of these bullying militants."

"Knowing The Reality," an editorial in the country's premier business newspaper, "Business Recorder" (cir. 25,000) (07/02)

"Taliban commanders, Gul Bahadur and Maulvi Nazir, had cut peace deals with the Pakistan government. Consequently, the conflicting loyalties of the two sets of Taliban commanders tended to be undermining the Pak-U.S. anti-Taliban co-operation in the tribal region.... Unless Baitullah Mehsud surrenders or gets killed in an air strike or otherwise and his new allies, Gul Bahadur and Maulvi Nazir, meet the same fate there is every possibility that the Pakistani forces have to fight a two-front war in Waziristan. Given that Mehsuds and Wazirs are a warrior race and have strong links with Afghan Taliban and have apparently united in the conflict on our western border could pose a grave challenge to the territorial integrity of Pakistan."

"Rising Of Locals Against Militants," an editorial in the

Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (07/02)

"A greater political awakening among the local population and an assured backing by the Army and other law enforcement agencies for their security would give courage and confidence to the local people to stand against the militants and that would be the real and enduring victory against militancy and terrorism."

"Crisis In The Making," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (07/02)

"The situation faced by the hundreds of thousands of IDPs in makeshift camps is getting grimmer.... The cramped and unhygienic conditions prevalent at the camps have already raised the incidence of illnesses such as cholera, malaria and acute diarrhea. With the monsoons coming up and many of the camps located in areas that are likely to be flooded, as WHO noted, the risk of full-blown epidemics looms large.... The state cannot afford to be seen as abandoning its citizens to the scourge of disease and death that will follow if the supply of essential medicines and basic health services at the camps slows down."

"Why Exploit People For American War," an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro-Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (07/02)

"Prime Minister's advisor on petroleum has made it clear that the money generated from the increase in petroleum products would be spent to cover budget deficit and expenses on 'war against terrorism.' Meaning that the so-called war expenses will be met through Pakistani tax payers' money.... America has imposed a war tax on the people of Pakistan via the government of Pakistan."

"Waziristan: Back To Square One," an op-ed by Ayaz Wazir in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (07/02)

"Villages in the Mahsud area were hit hard in the Waziristan operation. Whether Baitullah Mahsud and members of his Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan are killed or not is yet to be seen.... While the operation has been launched against the Mehsuds, life has become difficult for the Wazirs as well. Some families have reportedly crossed the border into Afghanistan in anticipation of the military operation. Reports reaching Wana speak of a warm welcome extended to them by the Afghan authorities. This requires urgent corrective measures by the government, or there will be disastrous consequences for Pakistan.... Worst still, the 'war on terror' was brought from across the border to their area. The collateral damage that they suffered in the eight years war is unparalleled in the history of the country. Neither Islamabad nor Washington did anything for the welfare of the people nor developed the area. The only favor that they did to the people was the gifts of death and destruction, through the drones."

"Cheer In The Midst Of Gloom," an op-ed by Mohammad Jamil in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (07/02)

"What was implied that Baitullah Mehsud had joined hands with the CIA, RAW and Mossad to destabilize Pakistan? This news has relevance, as Pakistan is reported to have provided intelligence about Baitullah Mehsud a number of times but the U.S. did not use drones to take him out. This created suspicions about CIA's involvement because drones are being operated by the CIA and not U.S. and NATO forces. Some analysts are of the view that the reason for the recent attacks and fixing head money for Baitullah Mehsud is that the U.S. has understood that Pakistan's security forces are going to get him and he will divulge all the secrets. So the CIA wants to see him dead."

"Pakistan Focuses On Islamic Extremism," an op-ed by Ahmed Rashid in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (07/02)

"The army's offensive in the FATA region is crucial to global security because the area is home to Al Qaeda and numerous allied groups. But it will not be easy. The rugged, mountainous region

lacks infrastructure and is now in the hands of the Taliban. The army's paramilitary troops have never won a decisive victory there.... The Pakistani public, army and government have suddenly awakened to the Taliban threat. That is a crucial first step. But it will need strong international support to effectively respond."

"Punjab next battleground," an op-ed by Jamaat-e-Islami chief Syed Munawar Hussain in Karachi-based right-wing pro-Jamaat-e-Islami Urdu daily "Jasarat" (cir. 3,000) (07/02)

"We have been saying for quite some time that the military operation will not remain confined to the tribal areas, it would go deep into the heart of Punjab too. American officials during their visits to Pakistan had expressed their concerns about South Punjab, and they suspected presence of some five to six thousands militants in the area, and maybe someday Mr. Holbrooke would come and say that a new fight is needed against Punjabi Jihadis."

"Mehmud Ahmadinejad Ratified As President," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (07/02)

"Iran's Guardian Council has said that following the Shoora's decision, the file of wrongdoings in Presidential elections has been closed. It has also said that the defeated candidates cannot protest now that the decision has come. However, there is an apprehension that the U.S. might try to spoil the situation because according to BBC, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has said that the decision to accept Ahmadinejad as President will be taken when the time comes.... In these circumstances, it would not be wrong to say that the U.S. is busy creating unrest in Iran - this is what Hillary Clinton's statement reveals. The international community must take measures to foil these attempts. However, it is the losing candidate's responsibility to save the country from internal turmoil and foreign conspiracies by accepting the electoral results with an open mind."

(All circulation figures are based on estimation)
Patterson